

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 062975

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FOL REPEAT OF PHNOM PENH 5138 TO SECSTATE INFO CINCPAC BANGKOK
SAIGON USUN MAR 20

QTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 5138

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS CB

SUBJECT: MARCH 20, THE 79TH DAY OF THE OFFENSIVE

REF: A. PHNOM PENH 5030

B. PHNOM PENH 4913

1. SUMMARY: KC ROCKETING OF PHNOM PENH INCREASED IN INTENSITY, WITH SEVERAL ROUNDS LANDING CLOSE TO THE EMBASSY. ROCKET FIRE AGAINST POCHENTONG CONTINUES TO BE MODERATE AND THE KC PRESSURE AROUND NEAK LUONG AND BANAM WAS ALSO COMPARATIVELY LIGHT. THE PLANNED OPERATION NORTHWEST OF POCHENTONG AGAINST ROCKET AREAS HAS NOT MADE ANY PROGRESS. THERE WAS NO CHANGE IN THE SECTOR NORTHWEST OF PHNOM PENH BUT THE SITUATION THERE IS POTENTIALLY SERIOUS AS UNDERSTRENGTH FANK FORCES ARE STRETCHED THIN. END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 STATE 062975

2. DURING THE MORNING OF MARCH 20, THREE 107MM ROCKETS EXPLODED NEAR THE EMBASSY AND THREE MORE FELL CLOSE BY DURING THE AFTERNOON. THESE WERE PART OF A TOTAL OF ABOUT 30 ROCKETS LANDING IN THE CAPITAL. CASUALTY FIGURES TO DATE FROM THESE ATTACKS ARE FOUR PERSONS KILLED, AND NINETEEN WOUNDED. NINE ROCKETS FELL ON OR AROUND POCHENTONG AS THE AIRLIFT CONTINUED UNINTERRUPTED.

3. FOR THE SECOND STRAIGHT NIGHT, THERE WERE NO GROUND ATTACKS REPORTED AGAINST NEAK LUONG AND BANAM ON THE LOWER MEKONG, AND ONLY FIFTY REPORTED INCOMING ROUNDS AS COMPARED TO 300-400 A NIGHT RECENTLY. SEVEN PERSONS WERE REPORTED KILLED, AND TWENTY-FIVE WOUNDED FROM THESE ATTACKS.

4. THE OPERATION NORTHEAST OF TUOL LEAP AGAINST KC ROCKET LAUNCHING AREAS HAS MADE NO PROGRESS AND THIS DOES NOT APPEAR LIKELY TO CHANGE. ROUTE 4 BETWEEN PHNOM PENH AND THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF KOMPONG SPEU REMAINS CUT. FANK IS ATTEMPTING TO REOPEN THE ROAD.

5. THE POSITION OF 7TH DIVISION FORCES NORTHWEST OF PHNOM PENH REMAINS BASICALLY UNCHANGED ALTHOUGH THE KC PRESSURE AGAINST VIRTUALLY ALL POSITIONS IS CONSTANT. FRIENDLY UNITS ARE BADLY UNDERSTRENGTH AND HAVE LITTLE MANEUVERABILITY AGAINST THE KC. THEY ARE TENUOUSLY HOLDING THEIR PRESENT POSITIONS, SEVERAL OF WHICH ARE ISOLATED.

7. THE KC FORCE THAT PENETRATED TO THE MEKONG RIVER EAST BANK OPPOSITE PHNOM PENH AND WAS THEN SEALED OFF BY FANK FORCES (REFTEL B) MANAGED TO MAKE ITS WAY OUT IN SMALL GROUPS. FANK ESTIMATES HAVING KILLED ABOUT 50 OF THESE ENEMY SOLDIERS. HOWEVER, THE KC ARE IN STRENGTH OUTSIDE FRIENDLY LINES AND MORE ACTION IS EXPECTED.

DEAN UNQTE INGERSOLL

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